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## **Narrating the “New” History: Museums in the Construction of the Turkish Republic**

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### **Abstract**

The disciplines of archaeology and museology underwent a profound reformation after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The Kemalist idea was to found a new state with new traditions, a common heritage to share within the Turkish boundaries; and the past became a powerful tool to fulfil this project. Numerous excavations were conducted in Anatolia after the 1930s, and consequently the archaeological museums were intended to play an important role in showing the new archaeological discoveries to the wider public. This paper aims to investigate the connection between museums and national identity in Turkey after the establishment of the Republic. In the first part, I analyze the development of the history of archaeological practice and its political implications before and after the foundation of the Republic. In the second part, I focus my attention on the foundation and development of the Archaeological Museums of Istanbul and Ankara, investigating the connection between the state and the museums through the visual representation of the past.

## Introduction

In 1935, the former director of the Istanbul museums, Halil Edhem Bey (1861–1938), wrote an article in *La Turquie Kemaliste*, the official propaganda publication of the Kemalist government entitled “The significance and importance of our museums of antiquities among the European institutions” (Edhem 1935: 2–9). In this piece, he claimed the superior status of the Istanbul Museum in comparison to the famous museums of London, Paris and Berlin. He highlighted how the archaeological richness of Turkey was immense and therefore the Istanbul Museum became the depository of important collections of artefacts from different periods and civilisations, mirroring the variety of Turkish history. He criticised the previous management of cultural heritage under the Ottoman Empire that, unfortunately, was not interested in preserving the past of the country, with the result that Anatolian artefacts were given away to enrich the collections of foreign museums. Edhem continued by illustrating the different departments that constituted the uniqueness of the Istanbul Museum and showing the heterogeneity of its collections: from Classical artefacts to Hittite statues and Turkish decorative arts.

Edhem’s article illustrates the contested place of museums in the representation of nationhood and national identity in Turkey after the establishment of the Republic in 1923, providing a glimpse into the ways in which museological practices were implicated in the nationalist project. In 1935, when Edhem made this statement, the nature of the museums and the narratives they were trying to represent were still objects of debate within Turkish society. As Crooke asserts: “nationalism produces a self-legitimising national interpretation of the past, which will have an impact on how archaeology is valued and the character of the museums. As a result of this, museums can be seen as the product of a certain political relationship with the past” (Crooke 2000: 2).

What are the modalities of the relationship between the nation state and archaeological museums in Turkey in this particular period of history? This paper aims to explore the impact that the dominant representations of the new Republican government had on the interpretation of archaeological objects in Turkey, examining the new relationship between the state and the museums through the visual representation of the past. The two case studies for this paper will be the main archaeological museums of the country: on the one hand the Archaeology Museum of Istanbul, and on the other the Archaeological Museums of Ankara, which were later assembled to become the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations. These museums are interesting examples not only because of their importance, but also for their own history. In fact, the Museum of Istanbul was founded prior to the advent of the Republic while, conversely, the Archaeological Museum of Ankara was the new museum of the Republic, founded in the new capital of the country to show the new discoveries of the Republican government to the wider public. Focusing primarily on exhibitions of these two museums in between 1923 and 1960, my research looks into the public negotiation, through time, of the new Republican identity through material culture. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, in fact, a critical reconstruction of the cultural system was set in motion and the field of public cultural institutions involved in the transformation and development of cultural areas such as archaeology and history was profoundly reformed. New institutions as the Turkish History Society were created and existing institutions were closed down or reformed, as in the case of universities. Therefore the beginning of the Republic will be taken as a starting point. The end point will be 1960, when,

after the military *coup d'état*, Turkey established the Second Republic. In the 1970s, the emergent Islamic revival influenced the diffusion of interest in Islamic and Ottoman history, culture, and archaeology in secondary and university education, a tendency that persists today under the Islamic Justice and Development Party (AK Parti), which has formed the government since 2002.

To understand the role that the disciplines of museology and archaeology played during the Turkish Republic, it is fundamental to contextualise these studies in the light of the historical events that led the Republican government to carry out a new cultural policy in order to create “new citizens” for the newborn Turkish Republic. The construction of knowledge about the past was strongly influenced by the mainstream historical theories of the time, such as the Turkish History Thesis and Blue Anatolianism. Using these historical theories as a framework for my research, I aim to explore how the knowledge of the past was constructed and diffused through the use of a visual approach that included the employment of tools such as museums’ displays.

### **Archaeology and politics in the new Turkey**

Archaeology, which entered the country as a foreign discipline conducted by foreigners, became, during the age of the Republic, one of the main fields of investment by the government. Their aim was to create a national Turkish identity and to legitimise the newborn Republic of Turkey. Consequently, the archaeological museums were intended to play an important role in showing new archaeological discoveries to the wider public. Since the establishment of the Republic, more than forty state-funded archaeological museums have been established all around the country. The substantial number of new archaeological sites and new archaeological museums shows the importance that the state gave to these practices as part of the nation-building projects of the time (Gür 2007: 42).

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, the Republic of Turkey was officially created. At that time the country was composed of many different linguistic and religious groups, and people continued to have notable territorial and regional differences. The leaders of the state had therefore the arduous responsibility of building a new nation combining peoples of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. The basis of this idea of nationalism was to abandon the multicultural past of the Ottoman Empire: the new people were given a new national character to attain in order to construct a new cultural identity. Under these circumstances, the new government started an extensive programme of reforms aimed at creating the new citizens of the Republic. With these reforms they wanted to administrate a new way of life for the people, inspired by ideals of westernisation and secularisation. These reforms had several aims: not only to give a common heritage to the new Turkish citizens but also to disconnect their previous relationship with the Ottoman Empire (Özyürek 2007b: 3–4). The new program of “modernisation” was intended to westernise the country and bring it to the same level as Europe. Within this policy, the ancient past and archaeology acquired a crucial role, becoming some of the primary tools at the service of the Republican ideology. As in other parts of the Middle East, the end of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent establishment of new nation-states coincided with the need for a new concept of citizenship, and new governmental institutions able to replace the Ottoman ones.

The most important reform for this research was the formulation of the *Turkish Historical Thesis*, a theory that tried to give Turks a sense of pride in their past and in their national identity.

According to the Thesis, modern Turks were the direct descendants of the Hittites who migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia during prehistoric times. After their migration during the Neolithic period, caused by adverse environmental conditions, Hittites settled in Anatolia where they established the famous Hittite kingdom. From Turkey they would later migrate to all the countries of the Mediterranean, creating all the major civilizations of ancient history such as Etruscans in Italy, Greece, Mesopotamia and Egypt. This Thesis had several goals: firstly, since modern Turks were ethnically related to the Hittites, they could claim territorial rights on the Anatolian land, against other ethnic groups (Greeks, Armenians and Kurds). Secondly, linking Turks to the Hittites would break off the connections with the Ottoman and Islamic heritage, supporting a more secular identity. Lastly, and most importantly, since the Hittites created all the most important civilizations of antiquity, Europeans' origins were also directly linked back to Turkey.

With the formulation of this theory, archaeology became the primary tool to prove and sustain this claim. Until the 1930s, archaeological excavations carried out in Turkey on Classical sites were directed mainly by Europeans. After the 1930s several new excavations were funded by the Turkish government to search for the oldest civilizations of Anatolia. In 1933 excavation campaigns were launched, with the support of the Turkish History Society, at Hittite sites such as Ahlatlıbel, Karakal and Göllüdağ. From 1935–37, young Turkish archaeologists such as Remzi Oğuz Arık and Hamit Zübeyr Koşay started work on new sites such as Alacahöyük, the Thracian Tumuli, the castle of Ankara, Etiyokuşu, Pazarlı Sarayburnu and Karaoğlan (Atakuman 2008: 224).

Undoubtedly, archaeological excavations on Hittite sites played a major role in the development of the discipline in Turkey, especially because the first missions directed by Turkish archaeologists were conducted exclusively on Hittite sites near Ankara. Many contributions in recent years (Atakuman 2008, Shaw 2008, Tanyeri-Erdemir 2006) focus on the importance that the Hittite civilization has had for the Turkish History Thesis and the subsequent development of archaeological research in this direction. Only recently, a new publication by Redford and Ergin explored the archaeological research in the Republic on Classical and Byzantine sites (Redford & Ergin 2010). In any case, judging the archaeology of this period as purely “nationalistic”, in the search of the Hittites as mythical ancestors of modern Turks, would be rather restrictive. Afet Inan (1908–1985), vice-president of the Turkish History Society, enumerated in her speech at the second congress of the Turkish History Society in 1937 the many excavations carried out by the society, highlighting the numerous efforts to explore not only the Hittite ruins but also Neolithic and Phrygian remains (Inan 1937: 9–10). Certainly, other civilizations were studied in different areas of the country: foreign archaeologists from Britain, United States, France, Germany, Austria, and Italy continued to conduct excavations in Turkish territory, directing their attention to different periods and civilizations.

In 1938 a new minister of education was appointed, Hasan Alî Yücel (1897–1961), and with him a new generation of intellectuals started to demand the establishment of a new “Western-oriented humanism” (Bilsel 2007: 228). While the principles of the History Thesis were soon invalidated, in the mid-1940s a new group of writers and translators, identified as the ideologists of “Blue Anatolia” (*Mavi Anadolu*) or “Anatolia Humanism”, initiated a search for another way to associate Turkish identity with Classicism and European culture through the idea of Anatolianism

(*Anadoluculuk*). Anatolianism saw all the civilization that prospered in Anatolia since prehistoric times till the present as part of the same cultural continuum, which constituted the antecedents of Anatolian culture. For this reason, all the cultural expressions on Anatolian soil contributed to its formation and had to be adopted as cultural ancestors. Although all the civilizations were important for the Blueists, three episodes in the history of Turkey held particular importance: first the Hittites, because they represented a “bridge” between the Mesopotamian world and the Aegean one. Secondly, the Trojans, because they were the autochthonous people of Anatolia who fought against the Greeks. And finally, the Ionians, because they were the homeland of Homer’s myths and the first philosophers (Bilsel 2007: 223–224). All of the works produced by the humanists aimed to show similarities between the new and old civilizations, e.g. between the Trojans and the modern Turks.

These theories intended to create a sense of common cultural identity among Turks, and also to give Turkey an equal status to European countries in the difficult time after the collapse of the Empire. In this climate, museums became a tool at the service of the government to prove this nationalistic thesis and demonstrate to Europe the equal status of Turkey.

### **The Istanbul Archaeology Museums**

The history of this museum harks back to the Ottoman times. The period of Ottoman modernisation that started in 1839, known as the *Tanzimat* or “reorganisation”, saw attempts by the government to foster the adoption of Western parameters. The reforms included not only the reorganisation of the political system but also archaeological changes, such as the introduction of specific legislation to control the activities of foreign archaeologists, an active collecting policy administered by the state, and the reorganisation of the Imperial antiquities collections as the Imperial Museum. In 1846, a collection of antiquities started to be assembled in the church of St. Irene, which consisted of Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine artefacts. In 1869, the Magazine of Antiquities became the Imperial Museum and was moved to the Tiled Pavilion (*Çinili Köşk*). At that time, following a common practice, the antiquities found across the whole Ottoman Empire, regardless of their cultural origins, were transported to the Museum of Istanbul, as it was considered the central and most important institution of the Empire. In the beginning, the Imperial museum was directed by two Europeans, the British Edward Goold and the German Anton Déthier, both of whom held a key role in shaping and westernizing the first Ottoman museum. Goold, a teacher at the Galatasaray Lycée, was appointed as the first director of the museum and he was responsible for the creation of the first catalogue of its holdings, which was published in 1971 (Shaw 2003: 86). In 1872, Anton Philip Déthier, a Classical epigrapher, was appointed head of the museum. Déthier continued with the pre-existing acquisition policy, requesting artefacts to be sent to Istanbul from all over the empire, and also contributed to the first draft of the Ottoman antiquities law of 1874.

At the accession of Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1889, the collection began including artefacts from the Ottoman or Islamic periods (Shaw 2000: 60). From 1908, these objects were housed in the Imperial museum. These changes were part of a project of the Sultan to create a myth of the Ottoman state. He wanted to transform the Empire into a nation in response to the new nations that were rising around him. After Déthier’s death in 1880, Osman Hamdi Bey was designated as the new director of the museum. Under his direction, the practices of archaeology and museology

strongly improved and a new phase began for these disciplines in the country. As Arik points out, Hamdi Bey's new policy was characterised by several directives: the promulgation of a new Antiquities Law, the application of a scientific method to the display of the collections in the museum of Istanbul, the inauguration of several excavations carried out by Turkish missions, the launching of professional publications from the museums, and the foundation of small provincial museums all over the country (Arik 1950: 4–5). Most important in his campaign were his efforts to establish an Ottoman archaeological presence throughout the Empire, and the drafting of a new and improved antiquities law. To do so, he began archaeological projects, the most famous at Baalbek and Sidon, in the territory of modern Lebanon. Under his directorship, numerous catalogues of the diverse collections hosted in the museum were published, from the Funerary Monuments to the Greek figurines. The finds of these excavations, in particular the famous sarcophagi discovered in Sidon, are still visible today in the Archaeology Museum in Istanbul and since their discovery they have represented one of the main attractions of the institution. To exhibit these monumental items Hamdi Bey asked for permission to construct a new building opposite the Tiled Pavilion, which was designed by the French architect Alexandre Vallaury and opened to the public in 1891 (Shaw 2003: 157). The great number of objects that were arriving in Istanbul soon made the museum too small, and two new wings were added in 1903 and 1908. Furthermore, in 1883 Hamdi Bey opened a School of Art in a new building next to the Tiled Pavilion.

At the end of the Ottoman Empire few museums existed in the country: the Antalya Museum, the Bursa Archaeological Museum, the Bursa Museum of Turkish-Islamic Monuments, the Konya Archaeological Museum and the Sinop Museum. These institutions, although rather small and not scientifically organised, were created to host the numerous objects that the new archaeological excavations were bringing to light in the various areas of the Empire. Arik defined this first period of Turkish museums as a phase dedicated to “accumulation”: the institutions lacked professionally trained staff who could arrange displays in a scientific way, and therefore museums were only aimed to protect and show to the public the artefacts discovered in the excavations (Arik 1950: 8). Until the end of the Ottoman Empire, and still in the early period of the Republic, the Archaeology Museum in Istanbul continued to be the main institution of the country where all the important decisions were taken.

In 1923, at the establishment of the Republic, the Museum of Istanbul consisted of three different buildings: the Museum of Antiquities, hosted in the main building and containing the collection of Greek, Roman and Byzantine artefacts; the Tiled Pavilion that hosted the Islamic art collection; and the Museum of Oriental Antiquities, hosted in the previous building of the School of Art since 1918 and containing the collection of Ancient Near Eastern artefacts. The director of the museum at this point was Halil Edhem Bey, who succeeded his brother Osman Hamdi Bey after his death in 1910.

The early years of the twentieth century coincided with a period of great importance for the discipline of museology for the first time, in fact, museums and archaeology received international attention. The twentieth century saw museology become “global”: new efforts were undertaken by numerous nations to study museums through sharing between, and comparison of, the institutions. In 1927, a new journal entitled *Museion* dedicated only to museums was founded. It later became one of the official journals of the new international organisation

devoted to the study of cultural heritage, UNESCO. In the 1930s, the League of Nations organised the first conferences dedicated to the architecture and management of art museums, where several experts from different countries were invited to participate. In this climate Turkey started to adapt its museums to international standards, investing in the scientific classification of the artefacts that started to become the object of numerous studies.

Hedhem worked as the director until 1931, when Aziz Ogan succeeded him. Ogan was inspector for the antiquities in the Izmir area during the first part of his life (1914–1931), and he was one of the main founders of the Izmir museum. After that he became the director of the Istanbul Museum, where he stayed for twenty-three years until his retirement in 1954. As soon as he was appointed director, Aziz Ogan travelled to Europe to visit all the main museological institutions of different countries: he went to France, Italy, Germany, England, Spain and Greece. In particular, he spent some time in Greece to sketch and take notes on the museum of the Acropolis in Athens. Under his supervision, the museum carried on with the process of modernisation that aspired to transform the museum of Istanbul in a modern institution that could be compared to the European organizations: several rooms opened to the public with new displays, for example the Hymyaritic and Parthian rooms in 1934. Furthermore, under his leadership the staff of the museum completed the classification of coins and medals, and opened a new room for the exhibition of coins, medals, gold ornaments and gems, which up till then had been kept in storage. He established a laboratory for the cleaning and restoration of antiquities, and a laboratory for photography and plaster casts (Ogan 1947).

In 1934 the museum started to publish a report on its activities (*Istanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri Yıllığı*), and this is still published today. These reports, which were issued intermittently from 1934 to 1969 and then again from 2001, are of great importance for the study of the policies behind the new acquisitions of the museum and the activities that were carried out in those years. Clearly, with the end of the Ottoman Empire the museum had to change its acquisition policy: first, because objects now could come only from the Turkish territories and second, because, with the establishment of several museums in the country, Istanbul was no longer the only institution to receive the finds of the numerous excavations carried out in that period. Consequently, the Istanbul collection was acquired through excavations, donations and special purchases. Newly acquired objects originated primarily from excavations of sites in the Istanbul area directed by the Museum's own staff. These new excavations were carried out mainly on classical and Byzantine sites, and brought to light a rich collection of artefacts. A few objects from other parts of the country and other periods, such as Hittite artefacts, were still becoming part of the collection of the museum, but only in minor parts.

Despite the different provenance of the newly acquired objects, the arrangement of the Museum's collection remained remarkably consistent in style from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. What changed throughout this time, however, was the classification of the objects, which became more scientific. The Museum's presentation, from its beginning in the late Ottoman Empire and over the first forty years of the Republic, was still derived from, and compared itself to, the famous European institutions. There was no particular emphasis on one single period of time and the Museum continued to display a large collection of artefacts coming from all the territories of the previous Empire.

## Archaeological Museums in Ankara

In Ankara, the new capital of the state, all the archaeological objects were hosted in three different locations until 1966, when all the objects from different periods were assembled in the Archaeological Museum (Temizer 1966). Unfortunately, there are not many sources on these early examples of museums in the new capital, and only a few articles and images are available. The situation is best illustrated in the guide *Ankara*, written in 1933 by the Galatasaray Lycée teacher Ernst Mamboury (1878–1953). Through this account, which constitutes the first travel book about the city, the reader gains a glimpse of the display's organisation of the ancient past in the new capital in the early years of the Republic (Mamboury 1933).

The first collection started to be assembled in 1921, during the War of Independence, in the White Tower (*Akkale*) on the citadel, in a building that was previously used by the municipality as a depot. This first site was chosen as the safest location to preserve the works of art from the ongoing war. It did not have the ambitions to be a modern museological institution. The objects were not scientifically catalogued and there was no accompanying text. The collection was very heterogeneous in its nature, containing objects of different kinds and from different periods: antique items from Roman, Greek, Seljuk, and Byzantine times, such as coins and jewels, were put together with ethnographic items, inscriptions and embroideries, lacework, printed fabrics, and costumes (Bayburtluoğlu 1991: 98–99). At that time the archaeological items found in the province of Ankara were transported to the new capital and accumulated in the White Tower. According to Mamboury, the objects were divided into two categories - Islamic and non-Islamic artefacts - and they were hosted in two different small rooms with the presence of some glass cases (Mamboury 1933: 229).

In 1926, the new Ethnography museum was founded in the city and the ethnographic objects in the White Tower were transferred to it. In addition to those, a few archaeological items were also moved to this new location. As Mamboury states, the museum initially consisted of eight rooms, of which three were entirely dedicated to archaeological artefacts. Finds from the excavations of the regions near Ankara from the Hittite, Classical and Byzantine periods were displayed in the last rooms of the building (Mamboury 1933: 230). The Ethnography museum was mainly intended to display religious artefacts and common objects such as tools, furnishings, items related to village life and agricultural production in the Turkish countryside (Kezer 2000: 104).

In the following years objects started to be assembled in a new space, the Roman Temple of Augustus, located next to the Hadji Bayram Mosque, one of the main tourist attractions of Ankara. This location was only supposed to be temporary, until the opening of the new Archaeological Museum in the Bedesten (Mamboury 1933: 230). The area was initially excavated in 1926 by the German archaeologists Daniel Krencker (1874–1941) and Martin Schede (1883–1947) and subsequently by the Turkish History Society, which, in 1937, removed the houses that were obscuring the temple. This research brought to light a section of the colonnaded Roman road and later the so-called Baths of Caracalla (Güven 2010: 39). In this location, the objects were divided and displayed in two different open-air areas: the first one being inside of the temple and the area along its perimeter, and the second one the enclave of the temple. In both of the areas the display of the objects was arranged without taking into account any scientific

taxonomy and items from different periods and of different typology were lying in the same space. Inside the temple Roman and Byzantine sculptures from Ankara, and Greek and Roman grave stones from Kütahya, Eskişehir (provinces in the West of Ankara) and Ankara were displayed. Along the temple's right perimeter there were the most beautiful Hittite sculptures yet found, which would later constitute the nucleus of the Hittite Museum. A total of 106 pieces from the Hittite excavations of Boğazköy and Alacahöyük were displayed to the public. The enclave included sarcophagi discovered in Synnada (a Phrygian site on the south-west of Ankara) by the American archaeologist Butler and numerous pieces of broken works of art such as architectural decorations and sculptures.

At the beginning of the 1930s, with the increasing number of archaeological excavations carried out in the Ankara region, the government decided to establish a new museum, the Hittite Museum, which was intended to host the new rich Hittite collection. The Ministry of Education, with the collaboration of the German urban planner Hermann Jansen (1869–1945), the Hittitologist Eckhard Unger (1884–1966) and the Swiss architect Ernst Egli (1893–1974), started to examine possible new locations for the new institution. The chosen site was located in the complex formed by the Mahmut Paşa Bedesteni and the Kurşunlu Han, respectively the old Bazaar and Caravanserai of the city. In 1931 Jansen and Egli prepared a report on the restoration of the buildings and developed a proposal for their renovation (Bayburtluoğlu 1991: 100). Since their plan did not convince the authorities, the Director of Culture at the time, Hamit Zübeyr Koşay (1897–1984), and the Minister of Education, Saffet Arıkan (1888–1947), asked the German architect Bruno Taut (1880–1938) to examine the state of these monuments and subsequently to give his professional opinion about it. Taut initially had concerns about the restoration of the building and suggested instead building a new complex, though he later changed his opinion and agreed to the restoration. Cleaning and restoration of the building began in 1937 and continued until 1945, under the direction of the minister of culture Koşay, the German Hittitologist Hans Güterbock (1908–2000), and the Turkish architect Macit Kural. Initially only the central hall of the Bedesten was the subject of restoration, and the other rooms of the Han were employed as temporary storage. In 1945 the museum officially opened its doors and hosted its first exhibition.

The Hittite collection was organised by Güterbock, who, in 1946, wrote the Catalogue of the museum. This was translated by Özgüç and published by the Ministry of Education. In this initial stage, the museum arranged the Hittite reliefs from Alacahöyük, Karkemish, Malatya and Sakçagözü in the central hall. In addition to that, there would also be reliefs from Ankara, but their interpretation at that time was still dubious: they dated back to the first millennium BC but they were neither Hittite nor Phrygian (Güterbock, Özgüç 1946: 51). Smaller finds were displayed in several showcases in the outer corridor. In 1960, the galleries of the building were expanded and the museum started to include objects from other periods. As can be observed in the catalogue of the museum (written in 1966 by Temizer), the museum at this point favoured a more chronological approach, and included objects from Neolithic, Palaeolithic and Urartian periods (Temizer 1966).

In 1968, the museum's task of covering all periods of the nation's history was implemented, as the galleries were reorganised to choreograph the visitor's journey through Anatolian history. The institution changed its name to "The Museum of Anatolian Civilizations" (*Anadolu Medeniyetleri*

*Müzesi*) and opened new galleries surrounding the central hall. After this date, the museum displayed archaeological finds from the Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Early Bronze Age, Phrygian Greco-Roman, and Urartian periods. The displays were arranged roughly chronologically, with the Hittite finds still occupying the most prominent location in the central hall. The grand narrative of the 1968 museum deviated from that suggested by the initial Hittite exhibition. The new Museum of Anatolian Civilizations suggested a narrative of national unity, based on the historical continuity of civilisations that lived in Anatolia from prehistoric to modern times (Gür 2010). In this sense, the various civilisations were no longer conceived as distinct parts of the same past, but as one cohesive civilisation giving rise to the one “great history” of Anatolia.

## Conclusions

The period after the establishment of the Republic in 1923 witnessed an enormous programme of archaeological excavation in Turkey. During these years, research into a new Turkish national identity was set in motion and different periods and civilisations were emphasised to legitimise the newborn nation. As Shankland observes, the relationship between archaeology and nationalism during the Republic can be considered as “tolerant” and “dynamic”, in the sense that instead of searching for a single and dominant past culture, Turkey favoured a discourse of a multi-faced and multi-period past (Shankland 2010: 226–227). In this essay, I have tried to analyse how the representation of Turkish archaeology was constructed and diffused through the use of a visual approach that included the employment of tools such as museums’ displays. Museums recontextualised archaeological artefacts and used exhibitionary techniques in order to fulfil nationalist discourses. In both of the cases of Istanbul and Ankara, we can observe how the visual representation of the past was incorporated into the historical and nationalistic narratives of the Turkish government.

In the case of Istanbul, the museum did not modify its display and arrangement of the different collections, and the items remained separated in the three different buildings established during the late Ottoman Empire. Although, in the majority of cases, new acquisitions were now coming from local excavations, the display continued to mirror the heterogeneity of the previous territory: in this sense, the museum was still trying to compete with European institutions. The activities carried out in the museum in this period were all directed towards the modernisation of the institution, which needed to be more “scientific”, and the different collections received great attention from numerous scholars: one example of this is the cuneiform tablets, which were catalogued, studied and published in those years.

In Ankara the situation was rather different: at the establishment of the Republic only a small depot existed, where objects were stored with the sole purpose of saving them from the destruction of the war. In the following years, antiquities from all periods (Hittite, Greek, Roman, Phrygian, Byzantine) were displayed in the different locations: the Museum of Ethnography, the Temple of Augustus and the Bedesten. In the 1930s, the formulation of the Turkish History Thesis encouraged the government to devote an entire museum to the display of the important Hittite finds from the new archaeological sites, whereas other antiquities were still accessible to the larger public, but displayed in other locations.

The museums' representation of the ancient past can be considered in the context of the nationalist theories: here the display can be seen as serving a wider political agenda of constructing Turkey as a "cradle of civilisations", in opposition to Europe. All the civilisations find a place in the display of antiquities in this period, and antiquities were appropriated by the government as a tool to instil a sense of national identity in the Turkish peoples.

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